



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Chamber hosts Secretary of the Air Force

Last week The Chamber hosted a reception and dinner at Club Giraud for the Honorable Michael W. Wynne, the Secretary of the Air Force. Invited guests included **General Bill Looney**, Commander of the Air Education and Training Command (AETC), AETC Vice Commander. **Lt General Dennis Larsen**, other AETC unit commanders and staff. Also on hand were Chamber Chairman **Steve Seidel**, Chamber Chair-elect **Brenda Johnson**, Chamber President and CEO **Joe Krier**, former Chamber Chairman **Mike Novak**, Chamber Military Affairs Committee Chairman, **Mark Frye**, Chamber Military Liaison to the AETC Commander, **Jack Hebdon**, **Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff** and **County Commissioner Lyle Larson**. Wynne took over the duties of the Secretary of the Air Force in November 2005 after serving as the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and the acting Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. Secretary Wynne noted that San Antonio has a national reputation as "Military City USA" and that this achievement was based on decades of Chamber and community support for the military. He emphasized this **sustained support** over a long period of time was a **significant factor** in the BRAC Commission's recommendations to add new military missions and people to San Antonio's Air Force and Army installations.



Commissioner Lyle Larson, Chamber President & CEO Joe Krier, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne, Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, Chamber Chairman Steve Seidel, General William R. Looney, III, Commander of Air Education and Training Command, are pictured at the dinner at Club Giraud.

San Antonio Express News

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Air Force Times



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June 02, 2006

Airman dies after ride in F-16

Staff report

The Air Force says it will investigate an airman's death in Florida, which occurred after a ride in the backseat of an F-16 Fighting Falcon.

Staff Sgt. Rom Walters of the Reserve 944th Fighter Wing, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., was one of several wing members deployed to Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., for 2½ weeks of training. Walters, a munitions systems troop, was a traditional reservist and had been with the unit for about seven years.

On May 26, Walters was on an afternoon incentive ride in an F-16. Typically, before a guest flies in an Air Force fighter, he or she is told how to handle the stress of high-G maneuvers and fitted with an oxygen mask.

During the flight, Walters lost consciousness, according to an Air Force report. The pilot cut the flight short and returned to Key West.

Walters was given medical treatment after the jet landed and taken to a Key West hospital. Walters died the next day, after being transported to a larger Miami hospital.

A wife and 11-year-old son survives Walters. A wing memorial service at Luke is planned for June 11.



AETC News Clips

Keesler AFB, Miss.



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Ole Miss & Keesler Partner For Physician Training

June 6, 2006 04:30 PM CDT

The University of Mississippi Medical Center is about to launch a unique partnership with the Air Force.

Under the agreement, the university will take over the administrative responsibility for the teaching program at Keesler Medical Center. That will allow Keesler to maintain its physician training program, which had been in jeopardy under the proposed BRAC realignment of the health care center.

The Director of Health Education for University Medical Center, Dr. Dan Jones, said the state will benefit since the university will be able to expand the medical program.

"It will allow the Air Force to continue to train those physicians. It will allow us here in Mississippi to still have the advantage of having those 100 physicians here. The Air Force will continue to pay for the residency positions. And the Air Force will continue to pay for the faculty who train those doctors at Keesler," Jones said.

The agreement will also allow the university to expand the medical training at Keesler, by adding post graduate programs in several health care disciplines.



AETC News Clips

Luke AFB, Ariz.



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Air Force Probes Reservist's Death Aboard Fighter Jet In Key West

POSTED: 5:41 pm EDT June 1, 2006

KEY WEST, Fla. -- The Air Force is investigating the death of a reservist who died while taking a ride on an F-16 fighter jet as a reward for his hard work.

Staff Sgt. Rom Walters, 40, died Saturday, one day after he took the flight to practice maneuvers at Boca Chica airfield, said Lt. Col. David Thoreson spokesman for the 944th Fighter Wing.

These "incentive flights" with experienced pilots are routinely offered, Thoreson told The Key West Citizen for Thursday's editions.

All reservists get annual physicals and an Air Force flight doctor conducts pre-flight screenings before the incentive flights, Thoreson said.

Walters was part of the 302nd Fighter Squadron, a reserve unit with the 944th Fighter Wing based at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona.

"Everything in this tragedy is under investigation right now," Thoreson said.

"We wish to express our deepest sympathy to the family members."

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Luke airmen prepare for deployment

Emily McCann
staff writer

Imagine going from a job behind a desk to fighting in a war in a matter of a few weeks. Many of the airmen who are deployed overseas each year have not fired a weapon since their basic training.

More than 200 airmen from Luke Air Force Base recently were deployed to locations across the world, and the base did everything it could to prepare the men and women for combat.

Luke goes through one or two cycles each year where airmen are sent overseas. Before leaving, deploying personnel are put through a week-long training course called the Expeditionary Thunderbolt Training Program, where they learn how to live in the field and survive in a combat environment.

The program was originally set up as 19 and a half hours of training for anyone who was deploying to an area with operations, but Luke decided that wasn't enough.

Over the past year, the training has taken place on the northwest corner of the base, but last week, it was moved to a site in Gila Bend, which better reflects the landscape and temperatures in Iraq.

"We feel we can better prepare them for their deployment if we can give them more training and more information than just the basics," said Tech. Sgt. Jason Ford, superintendent of the program. "It's about going above and beyond, and really preparing these guys as well as we can in the time allotted."

For some, it's a quick review of the things that they've been doing, but for others, the training is brand new.

The first class at Gila Bend was made up of only three or four people being deployed, a few cadets from the Air Force Academy, some ROTC students and a handful of volunteers.

The camp, which is set up on an old base, looks like a miniature tent city, with concrete pads, a tent made into a shower (which has no temperature controls) and a few porta potties.

During the first few days of the course, students are trained on everything they'll need overseas, including how to set up a camp, fire weapons, use night vision goggles and detect explosive devices.

"The hardest thing to deal with is the heat," said Maj. Kieran Keelty, who is being deployed to Kuwait for 141 days. "Staying hydrated is the most paramount thing we can do."

On the last night, the students are tested on their newly acquired knowledge by going through a team-based mission scenario, which utilizes all the skills they've just been provided with.

"It gives us a chance to take the students out of their element — away from their families, coworkers and friends, and throw them out into the field with some scenarios," Ford said.

They get a one-hour warning, during which they have to plan out squads, assign jobs, load up on water and test all their equipment and weapons.

West Valley View

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The goal of the mission is to retrieve a vital supply that had been dropped about a mile from their camp. The airmen use a Global Positioning System to guide their way through the brush to the supply. During their mission, another group, called aggressors, is attempting to attack the students with real BB guns and explosive devices.

In the midst of gunfire, the students are given situations, such as their own men having a sucking chest wound. If a person gets shot, the students have to respond to that person while they're still under fire, and relay the information back to the command center.

"Some people get overly excited and they can't talk on the radio, and that becomes a problem," Ford said. "We're trying to throw stuff out, so when they see it in the real deal, they're not going to freak out so much."

The airmen then have to secure an old two-story building, which holds the supplies they've been after, along with a few hiding aggressors.

Ford controls the situation, and can make things happen to ensure that he can check to see how the airmen will react. One of the main rules the students have to follow is to not fire unless fired upon. The scenarios are built up so that if they fire at the wrong time, they'll blow their whole mission, because they'll be firing at a hostage who is tied to a chair.

"If they do one thing, I do another, in order to test the different skill sets," Ford said.

After the initial mission, the students still have to be prepared for a mortar attack in the middle of the night, which is common overseas.

"While they're all asleep — nice and cozy in their bed, we wake them up with the sound of dynamite going off," Ford said.

The first training exercise took place on May 25, and got good reviews across the board.

"It was hot and difficult, but it was a good experience — you can never go wrong with training," said 1st Lt. Mike Castellanos, who works in computer maintenance at Luke, and is being deployed to Africa.

Ford said that overall, the men did really well and would be receiving a good debrief.

"There are no winners or losers in the operation — it's not like I send my bad guys in and hope they win, or I hope the other guys win," Ford said. "It's to see if they're getting the training."

A lot of bases don't have a space like Gila Bend to train on, so the site could possibly turn into a training center for other bases besides Luke, Ford said.

Emily McCann can be reached by e-mail at emccann@westvalleyview.com.



AETC News Clips

Luke AFB, Ariz.



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Luke land-swap plan dies

Those involved blame McCain's non-support for failure of big trade

David Madrid

The Arizona Republic

Jun. 4, 2006 12:00 AM

Land exchanges targeting property around Luke Air Force Base apparently are dead, with backers of the plan saying a lack of support from Sen. John McCain spelled their death knell.

So, while agricultural landowners in other parts of the Valley are selling their parcels at premium prices to housing developers, the owners of farmland bordering Luke, where residential development is severely restricted, say they are shouldering the burden of keeping the base free of further residential encroachment.

The land trades would have financially compensated them for that. The trades were one of 27 recommendations created by the Governor's Military Facilities Task Force, which spent six months crafting a strategy to protect the state's bases from closure.

The landowners and their supporters say it's a matter of simple fairness. They also say the deals' failure is typical of how they're treated whenever the federal government launches a round of base closures and realignments to make sure defense dollars are spent efficiently.

Their cooperation is sought until the threat to Luke passes, and then they're ignored, they say.

McCain's office issued a statement late Friday saying, "Sen. McCain and his staff have had meetings and discussions regarding the proposed land exchange. The senator's position all along has been that in order for him to introduce legislation affecting the exchange, all of the relevant stakeholders had to come to a consensus. Besides the developers, that includes the municipalities involved, Luke, as well as the federal land managers, in this case the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Only at that time could he in good conscience move forward with a bill. No consensus proposal has been submitted to our office to date."

As far as developers and landowners are concerned, the deals are dead.

"It's all politics," said Michael Francis, 54, an owner of land west of Luke and a member of the Governor's Military Affairs Commission. "It's no longer in vogue to be out in front of the public beating your chest saying, 'By God, we're going to protect the base.' "

Former Phoenix Mayor Paul Johnson, who represents one of the farming families, said, "I believe they (the Abel family) have been treated very unfairly in the process."

Development of housing is the biggest threat to Luke's continued operations as a training center for F-16 pilots and crew chiefs. For safety reasons, there must be vacant land beneath takeoff and landing corridors as well as a noise buffer between the jets and nearby houses. The land exchanges were widely supported by West Valley city leaders and other Luke defenders for just

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that reason.

A 2002 study of the Glendale base found that it generates \$1.4 billion a year for the state's economy.

Two years ago, with another round of federal base closings looming, developers signed contracts with some landowners to obtain acreage in high-noise zones around Luke.

The development groups planned to trade for BLM property near Goodyear and Buckeye. They would then reap profits by building homes on the BLM tracts, while the federal government would own the land near Luke. The original Luke landowners hoped to keep farming under lease arrangements with the government.

Mike Taylor, deputy BLM director for resources in Arizona, said that in concept, the trades seemed like a good idea. There were some concerns with the land the developers wanted, he said, but the trades still could have happened.

"We would have had to revise the management plans, and that's a public process, and quite frankly, we didn't see that the public would be that supportive of that," he said.

Taylor said the BLM wasn't aware the land exchanges were dead. Once the base realignment and closure effort was completed, his agency didn't hear from anyone about the trades again, he said.

Guy Inzalaco, a partner with Las Vegas- and Scottsdale-based Olympia Group, contracted with 17 landowners who hold about 6,000 acres within the base's noise zones.

Inzalaco said he has nothing to show for the more than \$1 million he invested in preparing for the land trades.

"We couldn't get Senator McCain to agree that this was the best way to deal with the encroachment issue out there," he said. "He (McCain) just decided that he wasn't going to support it. Without his support, we really just couldn't go any further."

Inzalaco's Olympia Group isn't a novice in such land trades, having completed a land swap that established a 2,500-acre buffer along the edge of the Las Vegas area's Nellis Air Force Base.

The Karl Abel family, which farms 350 acres inside Luke's high-noise zones, had a contract with another development group, the Luke Preservation Trust.

Johnson, a general partner with the Abel family in the trade negotiations, said the complexity of the deal certainly led to problems and helped its demise.

He added that the possibility of developers' profiting too much from the land exchanges was a legitimate concern.

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"For the most part, we heard from (congressional) delegation members again and again that they were supportive, but it needed some backbone. It needed a push," Johnson said of the trades. "And not that there weren't people trying. Congressman (Trent) Franks tried as hard as he could. One portion of McCain's staff was in support, and one portion was in opposition. Senator McCain seemed to be in support, but trying to get all his people moving in the same direction was a little tough."

Land-exchange supporters felt the trades would protect the base from closure for many years into the future. Consequently, they were widely supported by West Valley cities, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, the state Legislature, Luke and other Luke defenders. Only the Sierra Club voiced opposition to the land trades on the grounds that past such exchanges have shortchanged taxpayers.

Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh, a Luke supporter, said the land trades appealed to him because, once they were completed, encroachment would cease to be an issue.

"It could have been accomplished without any cost to it," Cavanaugh said. "But as it progressed, I did note there were people in influential positions who thought, 'This is going to be hard to do.' So I guess they were right."

Franks said he supported any viable plan to make the exchange happen. Anything that negatively affects the base's mission, such as residential encroachment, is a national-security issue, he said.

DeWayne Justice, whose family has farmed near Luke since the 1920s, said he has seen base-closure efforts come and go. One thing never changes, he said:

"Once the BRAC deal was done, I haven't heard from anyone."



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Luke AFB, Ariz.



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Motorycle crash claims life of Luke airman

Brent Whiting

The Arizona Republic

Jun. 1, 2006 10:55 AM

A Luke Air Force Base airman was killed when his motorcycle and a sport utility vehicle collided on a Goodyear roadway Wednesday evening, authorities said.

A husband and wife in the SUV, both off-duty law-enforcement officers, escaped serious injury, said Cmdr. Ralph McLaughlin, a Goodyear police spokesman.

The name of the airman has yet to be released until his relatives can be notified, McLaughlin said Thursday.

A Luke spokesman said Thursday people at the base are mourning the loss of the airman.

"Losing an airman, regardless of their rank or job, is always a tragic thing here," said Lt. Phil Ventura.

The crash occurred about 6 p.m. Wednesday while the airman was traveling south on Cotton Lane at the Interstate 10 overpass, McLaughlin said. The motorcycle collided with an SUV that was heading east on an I-10 exit ramp and preparing to turn north, he said.

The occupants of the SUV were an off-duty El Mirage police officer and her husband, an off-duty Maricopa County sheriff's deputy, authorities said.

McLaughlin said the cause of the crash remained under investigation.

Reach the reporter at brent.whiting@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-6937.

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Sheppard AFB, Texas



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Threat forces exodus

Man charged after statements about explosive

By Jessica Langdon/Times Record News
June 7, 2006, Page 1A

A federal hold has been placed on a 35-year-old man as the FBI and United States Postal Inspection Service consider federal charges, Wichita Falls police said.

The possibility that explosives might have been inside the federal building shut down business at the downtown post office and federal offices Tuesday, and interrupted the workday in unexpected — and unprecedented ways — for many people.

Ronnie Robert Molina, 35, was charged with false report or alarm in connection with the incident Tuesday, said Sgt. Joe Snyder, public information officer for the Wichita Falls Police Department. Molina's bond on that charge was set at \$10,000.

Authorities evacuated the federal building at 1000 Lamar as well as other buildings — including the First United Methodist Church's School for Little People — mid-Tuesday afternoon.

Police blocked several streets, keeping people out as bomb-detecting dogs swept the federal building for any suspicious signs.

"Apparently a subject went to three local media outlets in Wichita Falls," Snyder said. "He made statements that led authorities to believe that an explosive may have been planted in the federal building at 1000 Lamar."

Molina, who identified himself as an attorney, came to the Times Record News early Tuesday afternoon, and spoke about filing suit — involving help from several federal agents — against sheriff's officials in Wichita and Archer counties. He made a brief, vague mention of the existence of a bomb threat and the date June 6, 2006.

The Web site for the State Bar of Texas lists Molina as an attorney, but indicates he is not eligible to practice.

Dogs from Sheppard Air Force Base and Fort Sill went into the federal building, and Fort Sill's bomb squad investigated the scene.

The dogs showed some interest in an area of the building, and authorities did not want to overlook something that could be significant, Snyder said.

He said Tuesday evening there did not appear to be any explosives in the building.

A dog would also do a sweep of the mail distribution center in Wichita Falls as a precaution, he said.

Police detained Molina in the case, and investigators from several agencies interviewed him Tuesday evening, Snyder said.

The Wichita Falls Fire Marshal's Office was handling the investigation along with the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Wichita Falls Police Department's Criminal Investigation Section and the FBI.

Snyder pointed out several considerations for the police department — the day care just behind the building, keeping the public informed about the situation and bringing in extra officers to control traffic around the area.

Parents left work early Tuesday afternoon to pick up their children from the School for Little People. Staff members had taken the kids to play in the park across the street.

It was hot, but there was water, and the little ones were well taken care of, one mother said.

She left work as soon as she got the call that alerted her to the evacuation, and she went to pick up her child.

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"I think that they handled it in a very professional manner and were calling parents as fast as they could go down the phone list," the mother said. "The kids just thought they were playing on the playground."

As the agencies worked at the federal building, they called several people who had mailboxes in the area where investigators were concentrating their efforts.

One woman was at home watching "Wheel of Fortune" when she got a call from her sorority sister to take a post office box key down to the post office — fast.

She talked with law enforcement about the mail in her box.

"Our mail is fine," she said afterward, holding a large stack of envelopes. "It's a comfort to know we have people in our city looking out for us."



Torin Halsey/Times Record News

Bomb-detection dogs from Sheppard Air Force were brought in to investigate a bomb threat at the Federal Building in downtown Wichita Falls Tuesday afternoon.

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